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FOURTH PROGRESS REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN LIBERIA

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 911 (1994) of 21 April 1994 in which the Council decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) until 22 October 1994 on the understanding that the Council would, by 18 May 1994, review the situation in Liberia, including the role played by UNOMIL in that country, based on a report by the Secretary-General. Specifically, the Council wished to be informed on progress with respect to the full installation of the Council of State of the Liberian National Transitional Government; progress on disarmament and demobilization; and the implementation of the peace process as a whole.

2. The installation of the Council of State of the Liberian National Transitional Government was to be within the time-frame stipulated by the Security Council, including the seating of the full cabinet and the Transitional Legislative Assembly to bring about a unified civil administration of the country and conditions for the preparation and holding of the national elections scheduled for 7 September 1994. The Security Council called on the parties to cease all hostilities and cooperate fully in facilitating the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance to all parts of the country by the most direct routes.

II. POLITICAL ASPECTS

3. I am pleased to report that the Liberian parties have now succeeded in implementing one of the major tasks called for in the Cotonou agreement (S/26376) as well as in resolution 911 (1994), namely the full installation of the Council of State of the Liberian National Transitional Government. The Liberian National Transitional Government Cabinet was able to hold its first meeting on 13 May 1994 and issued a statement in which it expressed its profound gratitude to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), other African countries that have contributed troops, UNOMIL, the United Nations and its specialized agencies, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the entire international community for the support and assistance provided to Liberia, which has helped the country to reach the present stage of the peace process. The statement also called on leaders of all warring factions and armed

combatants to surrender unconditionally all their arms and other implements of war to the ECOWAS Military Observer Group (ECOMOG) and declared, inter alia, that the Liberian National Transitional Government was henceforth the government authority throughout the territory of Liberia. This has enabled the parties to bring to an effective end all factional claims to territory.

4. As I pointed out in my third progress report to the Council of 18 April 1994 (S/1994/463), the Liberian parties were experiencing some difficulties in agreeing to the allocation of certain key cabinet portfolios, namely defence, finance, foreign affairs and justice.

5. On 19 April 1994, after intense negotiations between the Council of State and the Liberian parties, the Council allocated the Ministry of Justice to the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), the Ministry of Defence to the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) and the Ministry of Finance to the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO). The three Ministers were confirmed on 20 April 1994 by the Transitional Legislative Assembly and inducted by the Chairman of the Council of State.

6. In my continuing effort to assist the leadership of the Liberian National Transitional Government, I held a meeting on 19 April 1994 with one of its members, who briefed me on the progress made and the obstacles experienced in this process. For my part, I emphasized to him that Liberia must meet the deadline of 7 September 1994 for the holding of the elections. This required rapid progress in the complete installation of the Liberian National Transitional Government; in the seating of its full cabinet and National Assembly; and in disarmament and demobilization. All of these steps were necessary to establish appropriate conditions for the preparation and holding of the elections and to sustain the peace process in Liberia. I also emphasized that the international community was facing increasing difficulties in financing peace-keeping operations, including UNOMIL, especially if the impression was given that the parties concerned were not making the necessary efforts to solve their problems.

7. On 22 April 1994, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia announced its decision to permit the seating of its members in the Transitional Legislative Assembly and the swearing-in of those cabinet nominees whose posts were not in dispute. The Vice-Chairman of the Council (National Patriotic Front of Liberia) also resumed his activities in the Council.

8. On 30 April 1994, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, in my absence from New York, discussed the situation in Liberia with President Nicéphore Dieudonné Soglo of Benin, Chairman of ECOWAS. The meeting afforded an opportunity to reaffirm the excellent cooperation existing between ECOMOG and UNOMIL and to emphasize the need for progress in the implementation of the Cotonou agreement by the parties in Liberia within the time-frame approved by the Security Council. President Soglo confirmed that the outstanding problems between the parties in Liberia were being resolved. With respect to the electoral system, he welcomed the dispatch of the high-level electoral team that would advise the Liberian parties on the various possibilities.

9. On 11 May 1994, after further protracted negotiations involving the Council of State and the Liberian parties, the Council announced its decision to appoint the National Patriotic Front of Liberia nominee for the post of Minister for Foreign Affairs. The newly appointed Minister is scheduled to be formally inducted on 19 May 1994. This resolution of the last of the four remaining ministerial posts has removed a major impediment to the full seating and functioning of the Transitional Government.

III. MILITARY ASPECTS

10. At the time of my last report on 18 April 1994, a total of 2,200 combatants from the three parties had been disarmed and demobilized. During the period of negotiations between the parties on the distribution of the four remaining cabinet posts, the pace of disarmament slowed considerably. Nearly 2,900 combatants have now been disarmed. With the full installation of the Liberian National Transitional Government, the parties have recommitted themselves to the complete implementation of the Cotonou agreement, including disarmament. It is therefore expected that the pace of disarmament will quicken in the days and weeks to come. I therefore again call on the Liberian parties to respect the terms of the Cotonou agreement, commit themselves to a timetable for disarmament and ensure that their combatants lay down their arms.

11. As noted in my report of 18 April fighting had erupted in the eastern part of Liberia between the National Patriotic Front of Liberia and the Liberian Peace Council, an armed group formed after the signing of the Cotonou agreement. The Liberian National Transitional Government, UNOMIL and ECOMOG have intensified their efforts to bring about a cease-fire between the two groups and to bring the Liberian Peace Council into the disarmament and demobilization process. I will provide details of progress in this regard in my next report to the Security Council.

12. In my third progress report (S/1994/463), I had also referred to the mediation efforts by ECOMOG and UNOMIL to resolve the dispute between the Chairman of ULIMO and the ULIMO Field Commander. This dispute had resulted in an outbreak of fighting among the ULIMO forces along ethnic lines. Since 6 May 1994, under the auspices of ECOMOG and UNOMIL, there have been daily meetings between the two groups to resolve this dispute. A cease-fire agreement between the groups in ULIMO was initially signed on 6 May 1994 by their respective front-line commanders. The two groups also reaffirmed their commitment to the Cotonou accord and its full implementation. On 9 May 1994, ULIMO's President Al Haji Kromah and General Roosevelt Johnson signed an agreement in the presence of the representatives of UNOMIL and ECOMOG confirming the agreement of 6 May. The conflict had prevented ULIMO's participation in the Council of State and the agreement thus paved the way for its effective participation in the Liberian National Transitional Government. The agreement also facilitated the reopening of the roads and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the south-western region.

IV. ELECTORAL PROCESS

13. I had indicated in my progress report of 18 April 1994 that I intended to send a team of international experts to consult with the Liberian National Transitional Government and the Liberian Elections Commission on how best the United Nations could assist in the conduct of the elections.

14. This team, which will arrive in Liberia on 22 May 1994, is scheduled to stay in the country for two weeks. As stated in my earlier report, the team will be advising the Elections Commission to enable it to determine the modalities of the electoral system to be used. The terms of reference for the electoral team are accordingly:

(a) To discuss with officials of the Liberian National Transitional Government and the Elections Commission the efficacy of various electoral systems, in particular, the system of proportional representation and the experiences of various countries that have applied this system;

(b) To provide advice to political parties, other national governmental and non-governmental organizations and Liberians on the various options for electoral systems that may be considered for use in Liberia;

(c) To review the Constitution of Liberia and the related electoral regulations and, in this context, to provide advice and guidance on the constitutional, legislative and other implications of particular options;

(d) To advise on the steps that might contribute to increasing public awareness through the widespread dissemination of information on various electoral systems by stimulation of local, regional and national discussion through the public media, public seminars and discussion forums.

V. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

15. Provided that the Minister for Foreign Affairs is inducted on 19 May 1994 as scheduled, the progress described in the present report provides a reasonable basis for optimism that the Liberian National Transitional Government, with the help of the international community, may soon succeed in resolving the tragic conflict that has caused so much suffering to the people of Liberia and the destruction of the country.

16. The overall efforts of the parties in Liberia, with the assistance of UNOMIL and ECOMOG, are now finally yielding some positive results. Nevertheless much remains to be accomplished by the Liberian National Transitional Government, especially in the areas of disarmament and demobilization, and there is no room for complacency. I call on Member States to support the Liberian National Transitional Government in the discharge of its responsibilities under the Cotonou accord. In this context, I have instructed my Special Representative on Liberia to advise me on concrete measures that Member States may take in this regard. I shall continue to keep the Council fully informed of the situation in Liberia and of the progress being made in the implementation of the Cotonou agreement.